

GBV PREVENTION NETWORK

16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence 2017

Campaign Overview

EVERY GIRL COUNTS!

WHAT ACTION WILL YOU TAKE TO KEEP GIRLS IN SCHOOL?

THEME: EVERY GIRL COUNTS! WHAT ACTION WILL YOU TAKE TO KEEP GIRLS IN SCHOOL?

Annually, for a quarter of a century, activists across the world have campaigned during the 16 days of activism to bring the issue of violence against women (VAW) into the agenda. These campaigns have been instrumental in raising awareness on VAW and highlighting the work that needs to be done. The Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL)'s 2016 assessment indicates the campaign is opening a new chapter globally. CWGL committed to transition the campaigns 'from Awareness to Eradication' of gender-based violence for the next phase of 16 Days.¹ This commitment means creating greater impact by going beyond making the issue and the work needed visible. It will require future campaigns to incorporate stronger human rights elements and better coordination among participating organizations and partners.

This year the global campaign will continue to focus on the right to education in situations of violent conflict, in relative peace, and a variety of education settings. It will make the links between gender-based violence as an encompassing patriarchal system of discrimination and inequality based on our relationships with power.

At the regional level the GBV Prevention Network members have been participating in the campaigns since 2004. This year, aligned with the global campaign, the GBV Prevention Network will focus on retention of girls in schools. It will highlight structural discrimination of girls throughout the education system right from the home, the school setting, and government policy that impact girls access to education and their experience. The campaign builds onto global efforts to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education articulated in Sustainable Development Goal 4². As well as the commitments by governments in Sub Saharan Africa to ensure universal education for all.

Even though education is a fundamental human right and governments have committed to ensuring free and compulsory education for all, girls still find it hard to access and advance into higher levels of education. Across sub-Saharan Africa, 9 million girls will never attend school compared to 6 million boys. In total, 34 million children between the ages of 6 and 11 are out of school across the region. One-third of these children will start at a later age, but almost half will remain entirely excluded, with girls facing the biggest barriers.³ Early marriage, teen age pregnancy and policies/ social norms that prevent pregnant girls from returning to school, harassment and rape are some of the main barriers.

- In sub-Saharan Africa, 40% of women are married as children.⁴ Often girls will be withdrawn from school and married off, many times for the benefit of the bride price that marriage will attract.
- Expulsion of pregnant girls from school remain to be policy and common practice in many Sub Saharan countries. Girls are denied the opportunity to re-enroll after they give birth, no matter how much they want to strive and continue their education; yet in many cases they are raped/coerced into sex resulting into the pregnancy. Every year, more than 8,000 girls in Tanzania drop-out of school because of pregnancy. Married girls are also expelled from school.⁵

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- Girls face sexual violence, harassment coercion etc. These could be perpetrated by strangers or members of the school community (teachers, staff, fellow students). Human Rights Watch stated in each of the three provinces (in South Africa) visited, we documented cases of rape, assault, and sexual harassment of girls committed by both teachers and male students.⁶

Besides violence, girls face additional barriers. Within the home setting, because of their socially ascribed roles girls will spend more time on their household chores and less time on academic study and preparation. Per a report released by UNICEF ahead of International Day of the Girl Child on 11 October, girls between 5 and 14 years old spend 40 per cent more time, or 160 million more hours a day, on unpaid household chores and collecting water and firewood compared to boys their age⁷.

When a girl is restricted from completing her studies, it is clearly a violation of her rights; and failure to honor the commitments made by communities/governments. These perpetuates the power imbalances that already exist between women and men; reinforces girls/women in subordinate positions. It is not only a loss for individual girls/women but for communities and nations. If we can support girls to complete their education; we are reducing her risk of experiencing violence, infant and maternal mortality rate, population explosion; and ensuring educated families and nation. Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world (Nelson Mandela). You can do something to support girls to stay in school and, what action will you take?

CAMPAIGN ASKS

The GBV Prevention Network's campaign will continue to focus on girl's education and ask community members, parents, schools and policy makers to start acting to make access and completion of education open for girls and women. We are highlighting the rights for girls to education and exploring ways to ensure girls stay and complete their education. As we highlight the issue of making education safe for all, organizations can choose from and highlight any one or combination of the following issues that act as a barrier to education for girls in their own community and call attention to the issue for action.

1. Access to education: ensure all girls are enrolled in school and remain in school till they complete higher level education
 - a. Do girls and young women access school equally in your community?
 - i. What are the numbers of female and male students at different levels of education in your community? Does the proportion change at higher levels? Why?
 - ii. Are there policies that are discriminating against girls (i.e., expulsion of pregnant girls, etc.)
 - b. Even when girls access education are they allowed to complete school? What are the barriers to girl's completion of education? At what age do girls/young women in your community marry off? Do they continue their education after marriage?
2. The educational system – Challenge the systems that reinforce negative stereotypes and power imbalances faced by girls. Ensure the curriculum and text books encourage and portray gender equality
 - a. What is the content that is taught at school does it reinforce discrimination of girls and young women –? (are schools setting up the seeds of power imbalance? Do they reinforce the notions that boys are more valuable than girls?)
 - b. Are girls and young women encouraged to participate in all activities as their male counterparts are?

16 Days of Activism is an opportunity to act towards creating positive change. How will you get involved?

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(ENDNOTES)

- 1 Center for Women's Global Leadership. (2016) A LIFE OF ITS OWN an Assessment of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence Campaign.
- 2 Sustainable development goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Retrieved from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg4>
- 3 UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) and the Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report. (July 2016). Policy Paper. Leaving no one behind: How far on the way to universal primary and secondary education? <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002452/245238E.pdf>
- 4 Girls not brides Report. (2015). Ending child marriage in Africa. <http://girlsnotbrides.theideabureau.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Child-marriage-in-Africa-A-brief-by-Girls-Not-Brides.pdf>
- 5 Human Rights Watch <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/04/12/girls-sake-tanzania-should-stop-abuse-bias-schools>
- 6 Human Rights Watch. March 1, 2001. Scared at School Sexual Violence Against Girls in South African Schools
- 7 UNICEF. (October 7, 2016). Press release: girls spend 160 million more hours than boys doing household chores everyday